

the uninsured rate down from 27.3 percent to 20.8 percent, and insured over 265,000 individuals who did not have coverage before. While the main safety net provider in my district, Parkland Memorial Hospital, provided \$1 billion in uncompensated care in 2015, Parkland and the other safety net providers face severe financial burdens in the House GOP proposal.

One of my main concerns with this bill is that it punishes people who get their coverage through Medicaid by capping and slashing the program. With 70 million Americans and 5.2 million Texans who currently rely on Medicaid, per capita caps on the program would not meet the needs of the population, and the people would suffer.

People will live or die as a result of our decisions here on this floor, Mr. Speaker. There is no reason for the Republican leadership to rush this legislation without careful consideration, including the input of those who actually provide health care.

We need to listen to our constituents, our nurses, our doctors, our long-term care aides, and our hospitals. We must listen to the people. This bill will force Americans to pay more for their premiums, more for their care, more for their medicine, more out-of-pocket expenses and deductibles, all the while giving tax breaks directly to the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to consider the harmful effects of this bill. Your constituents are asking you to work with us to repair the Affordable Care Act, and we are ready to work.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD correspondence from National Nurses United.

NATIONAL NURSES UNITED,
Silver Spring, MD/Oakland, CA,
March 21, 2017.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the 150,000 Registered Nurse members of National Nurses United, we urge you to oppose the American Health Care Act when it comes to a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives.

Registered Nurses care for Americans in their most difficult hours. More than any other profession, we see the personal effects of a flawed healthcare system in the hospital every single day. Our primary responsibility is to protect the health and wellness of our patients by providing care at the bedside.

The American Health Care Act poses a mortal threat to the health and well-being of our patients, and to the health security of our country. Last week, the Congressional Budget Office reported that 24 million Americans will lose insurance coverage under the original legislative text. The plan would increase the number of uninsured people by 78% in 2020, and by 86% in 2026. This reality is in stark contrast to one of the key campaign promises made by the President this past year—instead of providing “insurance for everybody”, this healthcare bill will dramatically reduce the number of insured Americans. The President also promised not to cut Medicaid or Medicare, but the AHCA includes drastic cuts to both programs.

There is not a single aspect of this legislation that will benefit our patients who lack

the health care services that they need. Specifically, the legislation will:

Eliminate the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which will worsen the health of our communities, spread infectious disease, and increase health system costs;

Phase out coverage for Medicaid expansion in Medicaid expansion states beginning in 2020, while preventing new states from receiving enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage in order to expand Medicaid;

Institute a per capita cap for Medicaid, along with the option for states to use a block grant instead. Both options will reduce coverage for the most vulnerable, shift care from clinics to emergency rooms, increase system costs for the chronically ill as they defer treatments because of cost, and unfairly shift the burden of costs to the states;

Empower individual states to determine eligibility, scope and benefits for Medicaid as per their own discretion, but there will be no increase in federal monies to cover expanded eligibility;

Eliminate funding to Planned Parenthood which will worsen women's health, and create burdens for women, families and society from unsafe pregnancies and other health conditions no longer treated;

Eliminate the definition of “essential benefits”—a move that makes all patients vulnerable to the distortions and marketing games of insurance companies;

Repeal the cost-sharing subsidies of the ACA, and destroy the ability of 80% of people currently buying insurance on the Exchanges to maintain coverage;

Open the door for junk insurance. The bill includes a penalty for lack of continuous coverage, creating a big incentive for patients to buy low-cost, no-coverage plans;

Fail to encourage low-cost coverage, because the legislation shifts thousands of dollars in spending from insurance company spending to the individual's out of pocket costs;

Reproduce the failed “high-risk pools” of the 1990's and 2000's, through the “Patient and Stability Fund”. It is inevitable that the number of eligible patients will overwhelm the resources of these high risk pools;

Repeal the Medicare Hospital Insurance Tax, which will reduce funding and destabilize for the Medicare program that our nation's seniors rely on;

Allow insurers to charge seniors five times the amount of a younger person. This revision will prove to be deadly for our nation's seniors, and it reveals the extent to which this reform will benefit the profit margins of insurance companies, at the expense of patients' lives.

Our experience at the bedside, coupled with analysis from health policy researchers, confirm our conclusion that this bill does not address the primary concerns of our patients: getting the care they need when they need it, without overwhelming financial burdens.

Over many years, with the notable exception of the passage of Medicare in 1965, the United States has built a patchwork health system around private insurance access, rather than genuine access to health care. This legislation, if enacted, will perpetuate this system while undermining gains made in the Affordable Care Act. Given the ultimate reductions in Medicaid, and the other reversals in the bill, there is literally nothing in this legislation that provides our patients with the care they need.

In order to effectively address the health system problems in this country, legislators must move beyond a private health insurance company dominated system. Health policy research, and the experience of every other wealthy nation, shows that a single-payer health care system is the most suc-

cessful model to use. In the United States, Medicare is an example of how successful such a system can be. If the goal of our health system is to provide quality care for all Americans at the lowest cost possible, then we must transition to a single payer healthcare system—or Medicare For All.

The principal effect of the American Health Care Act, on the other hand, will be the loss of existing health coverage for tens of millions of people without any restraints on healthcare industry pricing practices. This legislation will result in overwhelming health insecurity for the American people.

On behalf of registered nurses across the country, we urge the rejection of this flawed, and deadly, proposal. We urge you to instead support guaranteed healthcare for all, through an improved, expanded Medicare for All program.

Sincerely,

DEBORAH BURGER, RN,
President, NNU.
JEAN ROSS, RN,
President, NNU.

RECOGNIZING CAMPBELLSVILLE UNIVERSITY LADY TIGERS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay special recognition to the Campbellsville University Lady Tigers women's basketball team upon making the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky proud with another successful college basketball season. The Lady Tigers finished with a 28-7 record and appeared in their second NAIA Fab Four round in 3 years.

In their final four game in Billings, Montana, against Oklahoma City, two girls from my home county of Monroe had career highlights. Madison Clements hit six 3-pointers and Lauren Turner had nine assists. The Campbellsville University Lady Tigers are also coached by a Monroe County girl, Ginger High Colvin.

The Campbellsville University Lady Tigers have been one of the most dominant college girls basketball programs in the NAIA over the past 20 years. Campbellsville University is one of Kentucky's finest educational institutions, and I am very proud that Campbellsville is in the First Congressional District of Kentucky.

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT DOESN'T HELP MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, a woman from my district walked into my office and told me about her daughter, a young lady diagnosed with acute mental illness at just 4 years of age.

A decade later, the stories that that young mom shared would split your heart: stories of countless ER visits, endless fights with insurers and courts,

a little girl being boarded at a hospital for 21 days while they searched up and down the East Coast to find a bed where she could stay.

At 14 years old, she has now spent half of her life in residential care. But it was how her mother ended that story that has stuck with me. She looked me in the eyes and told me that: "Compared to other people I know, we have been lucky."

Mr. Speaker, that is not luck. This is a mental health system so broken that it is hard to recognize.

And how have our Republican colleagues followed up in response? They have offered a piece of legislation that is one of the largest assaults on our mental health system in recent history.

The GOP repeal bill will remove guaranteed behavioral health coverage for everyone covered under the Medicaid expansion. It will abandon those suffering from substance abuse disorder to fend for themselves in a country ravaged by opioid abuse. It will allow work requirements for care, forcing countless people to somehow choose between getting treatment and keeping their job. It will help insurers further skirt parity laws that require them to treat the mentally ill fairly. It will send out-of-pocket costs soaring for the most vulnerable among us.

Mr. Speaker, one in five Americans today suffer from mental illness. These brave men and women and their families that love them deserve more than the cheap luck of a broken system. They deserve more than the empty rhetoric of a bill that "might" cover or "could" cover the care that they need. They deserve an ironclad commitment from their government that we will have their back. This bill does not do that.

DON'T REPEAL AFFORDABLE CARE ACT—MAKE BIG FIXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, the healthcare plan supported by President Trump and Speaker RYAN will raise premiums and deductibles.

Let's tell the truth here on the floor of the House of Representatives. It will raise premiums and deductibles. It will throw millions off of their insurance. It will shift the cost of health care to the States who are fiscally strapped today, causing a rationing of care at the State level. And, yes, it will cover less and less people and raise the insecurity that people have today about whether or not, if they get an illness or someone in their family does, they are going to have healthcare coverage.

The result is that working people, older Americans, will pay more; and, in fact, with older Americans, it will impose an age tax. The irony of this is that working people and older Americans are going to be paying for the tax

breaks in this bill, tax breaks to millionaires and to billionaires. I will explain.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that 14 million Americans will lose coverage in 2018; 24 million Americans will lose their insurance coverage by 2026. In my State of Connecticut, 220,300 individuals are projected to lose their health insurance by 2026.

Again, older Americans will be hit the hardest. They will see their premiums spike. Yes, it is an age tax. And the reckless cuts in this bill rob, in addition to this, it robs the Medicare trust fund, which people rely on, of over \$170 billion, shortening the life of that trust fund by years. Long-term care that older Americans rely on will be hurt, as well as folks who are disabled. And children will be hurt as well.

Over the next 10 years—and again, these are not my numbers, but the Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that two of the tax breaks in the repeal bill will provide \$275 billion in tax cuts to individuals who have an income over \$200,000, and nearly \$190 billion will go to tax cuts for health insurance companies.

Do we believe that they are hurting?

It is also going to provide a tax break for drug companies, for pharmaceutical companies.

Are they hurting today? No. They are reaping profits every single day. That is the case with medical device manufacturers as well.

While the wealthiest Americans and corporations reap the benefits of this Trump bill and Ryan bill, roughly 160 million households with incomes below that \$200,000 level will pay for the repeal of these taxes.

I have heard from thousands of my constituents about how the Affordable Care Act has positively impacted their lives. I have submitted testimony for the record from women in my district who depend on the Affordable Care Act to manage life-threatening illnesses, get back to work, get them the mental health services that they need.

Just think of that injustice when you think about Mnikesa Whitaker, whom I spoke to just 2 weeks ago. She has an autoimmune disease which is called scleroderma. I regret to say that this has put her life in danger, but she now has the protection because she is no longer threatened by preexisting conditions. In her words, she said: "I will die without the Affordable Care Act."

We have a moral obligation not to let Mnikesa or others down. We have an obligation to older Americans and to the middle class of this country, to working people. The Affordable Care Act needs to be changed in critical ways. Premiums and deductibles are way too high and are putting too much strain on families who barely make enough to live on. We know that because their wages have not kept pace with rising costs. There is not enough competition in the marketplaces.

But instead of repealing the Affordable Care Act, we should be working our hearts out to make the big fixes that are necessary. But my friends, that starts with defeating this wrong-headed bill.

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LET'S COME TOGETHER TO MAKE MEANINGFUL PROGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LAWSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the Republican plan to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act is an exercise in smoke and mirrors.

This proposal would give tax breaks to wealthy Americans by burdening hardworking families with higher healthcare costs.

The Republican plan allows for soaring new healthcare costs for our seniors and shortens the life of the Medicare trust fund, endangering seniors and disabled Americans who depend on Medicare coverage.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that if the Republican proposal became the law of the land, some 14 million people will be without healthcare insurance in 2018, and up to 24 million could lose their healthcare coverage by the year 2026. The CBO also found that average premiums for people buying insurance on their own would be 15 to 20 percent higher in 2018 and 2019 than they would under current law.

In my home district, the uninsured rate has gone from 18.7 percent to 14.9 percent since the Affordable Care Act was implemented, and 34,000 people have purchased coverage thanks to the ACA. Those people are now at risk of losing their healthcare coverage if the Republican plan becomes law. This is completely unacceptable to Floridians.

We know that the Affordable Care Act is not a perfect law, and there is a lot of room for improvement. That is what we should focus on in Congress right now: coming together to figure out ways to bring down healthcare costs, stabilize the market, and help ensure that more people can have access to the affordable health care they need and deserve.

We need to put aside the partisan bickering, roll up our sleeves, and get to work. It is a sad day in America when Members of Congress are unable to come together to do what is right for the American people. I will continue to fight to ensure that Floridians with preexisting conditions don't have to worry about losing their healthcare costs, and that young adults can stay on their family's insurance until they reach age 26.

I urge my colleagues to remember that no roads or bridges were ever built by Democrats or Republicans. No war was ever won by Democrats or Republicans. From Social Security to Medicare, to putting a man on the Moon